

Nigerian Pidgin

Nigerian Pidgin or originates from Igbo land **Pidgin** is an English-based pidgin and creole language spoken as a *lingua franca* across Nigeria. The language is sometimes referred to as "*Pijin*" or *Broken* (pronounced "*Brokun*"). It can be spoken as a pidgin, a creole, slang or a decreolised acrolect by different speakers, who may switch between these forms depending on the social setting.^[3] A common orthography has been developed for Pidgin which has been gaining significant popularity in giving the language a harmonized writing system.^{[4][5]}

Variations of what this article refers to as "Nigerian Pidgin" are also spoken across West and Central Africa, in countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Benin, Ghana and Cameroon.

As an example, the English phrase, "how are you?" would be "how you dey?" in Pidgin.^[6]

Nigerian Pidgin	
Native to	Nigeria
Native speakers	(undated figure of 30 million L1 and L2 speakers) ^[1]
Language family	English Creole <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Atlantic ▪ Krio ▪ Nigerian Pidgin
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	pcm
Glottolog	nige1257 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nige1257) ^[2]

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Status

Nigerian Pidgin is commonly used throughout the country, but it has not been granted official status.^[7]

In 2011, Google launched a search interface in Pidgin English; "Effect of Nigerian Pidgin English".^[8] In 2017, BBC started services in Pidgin, BBC News Pidgin.^[9]

Variations

Many of the 250 or more ethnic groups in Nigeria can converse in the language, though they usually have their own additional words. For example, the Yorùbás use the words *Şebi* and *Abi* when speaking Pidgin. They are often used at the start or end of an intonated sentence or question: "You are coming, right?" becomes *Şebi you dey come?* or *You dey come abi?*

Another example is the Igbos adding the word *Nna*, also used at the beginning of some sentences to show camaraderie: For example, *Man, that test was very hard* becomes *Nna mehn, that test hard no be small*. Another Igbo word that has gotten precedence in pidgin is *Una*, derived from the Igbo word *Unu* which means the same thing: "you people". For example, "Una dey mad" in Pidgin English translates to "You people are crazy" in English. The Igbo word "Unu" has also found its way to Jamaican patois, and it also means the same thing as in Nigerian Pidgin. Also another Igbo word that is constantly being used in Pidgin language is "Biko". Biko means please in Igbo language. So for example, one could say in a pidgin sentence "Biko free me" which translates to "Please leave me alone" in English. The Hausas added the word *ba* at the end of an intonated sentence or question. For example, "you no wan come ba?" which translates to "You don't want to come right?"

Nigerian Pidgin also varies from place to place. Dialects of Nigerian Pidgin may include the Warri; Sapele; Benin City; Port Harcourt; Lagos, especially in Ajegunle; and Onitsha varieties.

Nigerian Pidgin is most widely spoken in the oil rich Niger Delta where most of its population speak it as their first language. There are accounts of pidgin being spoken first in colonial Nigeria before it being adopted by other countries along the West African coast.^[10]

While pidgin is spoken by many, there are wide swathes of Nigeria where pidgin is not spoken or understood, especially among those without secular education in core northern parts of Nigeria.

Relationship to other languages and dialects

Similarity to Caribbean Creoles

Nigerian Pidgin, along with the various pidgin and creole languages of West Africa share similarities to the various English-based Creoles found in the Caribbean. It is especially obvious in Jamaican Creole (also known as Jamaican Patois or simply Patois) and the other creole languages of the West Indies. Linguists posit that this is because most slaves taken to the New World were of West African descent. The pronunciation and accents often differ a great deal, mainly due to the extremely heterogeneous mix of African languages present in the West Indies, but if written on paper or spoken slowly, the creole languages of Caribbean are for the most part mutually intelligible with the creole languages of the West Africa. The presence of repetitious phrases in Caribbean Creole such as "su-su" (gossip) and "pyaa-pyaa" (sickly) mirror the presence of such phrases in West African languages such as "bam-bam", which means "complete" in the Yoruba language. Repetitious phrases are also present in Nigerian Pidgin, such as, "koro-koro", meaning "clear vision", "yama-yama", meaning "disgusting", and "doti-doti", meaning "garbage". Furthermore, the use of the words of West African origin in Jamaican Patois "Unu" and Bajan dialect "wunna" or "una" - West African Pidgin (meaning "you people", a word that comes from the Igbo word "unu" or "wunna" also meaning "you people") display some of the interesting similarities between the English pidgins and creoles of West Africa and the English pidgins and creoles of the West Indies, as does the presence of words and phrases that are identical in the languages on both sides of the Atlantic, such as "Me a go tell dem" (I'm going to tell them) and "make we" (let us). Use of the word "deh" or "dey" is found in both Caribbean Creole and Nigerian Pidgin English, and is used in place of the English word "is" or "are". The phrase "We dey foh London" would be understood by both a speaker of Creole and a speaker of Nigerian Pidgin to mean "We are in London" (although the Jamaican is more likely to say "Wi de a London"). Other similarities, such as "pikin" (Nigerian Pidgin for "child") and "pikney" (used in islands like St.Vincent, Antigua and St. Kitts,

akin to the standard-English pejorative/epithet *pickaninny*) and "chook" (Nigerian Pidgin for "poke" or "stab") which corresponds with the Bajan Creole word "juk", and also corresponds to "chook" used in other West Indian islands.

Connection to Portuguese language

Being derived partly from the present day Edo/Delta area of Nigeria, there are still some words left over from the Portuguese language in pidgin English (Portuguese ships traded slaves from the Bight of Benin). For example, "you sabi do am?" means "do you know how to do it?". "Sabi" means "to know" or "to know how to", just as "to know" is "saber" in Portuguese. (According to the monogenetic theory of pidgins, *sabir* was a basic word in Mediterranean Lingua Franca, brought to West Africa through Portuguese pidgin. An English cognate is savvy.) Also, "pikin" or "pickaninny" comes from the Portuguese words "pequeno" and "pequeninho", which mean "small" and "small child" respectively.^[11]

Nigerian Standard English

Similar to the Caribbean Creole situation, Nigerian Pidgin is mostly used in informal conversations. However, Nigerian Pidgin has no status as an official language. Nigerian Standard English is used in politics, the Internet and some television programs.

Homophones

The most important difference compared to other types of English is the limited repertoire of consonants, vowels (do 6) and diphthongs (3) used. This produces a lot of homophones, like thin, thing and tin which are all three pronounced like /tin/. This circumstance gives a high importance to the context, the tone, the body language, and any other ways of communication for the distinction of the homophones.

See also

- Pichinglis
- Creole language
- Jamaican Creole Language

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External links

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- Online Nigerian Pidgin (<http://www.ngex.com/personalities/babawilly/dictionary/default.htm>)
- Pijjin.com (https://web.archive.org/web/*http://www.pijjin.com/) A discussion forum run only in Pidgin (Internet Archive)
- Pidginguide.com (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180806132051/http://pidginguide.com/>) Nigerian Pidgin English dictionary, translator, and community

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